



WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION  
Kitsap County



## WATER STEWARDSHIP 2023

### QUOTES

“ The Beach Naturalist training program raises awareness of how we are connected to the surrounding marine ecosystem and fosters stewardship.”

-2023 Beach Naturalist Trainee

“ The Stream Steward program enables community engagement and involvement at the grass roots level - this is essential if real and lasting progress in restoration and stewardship is expected in our communities.” \_

-2023 Stream Steward Trainees

“ The education of volunteers to share knowledge with the general public and, perhaps more importantly, the children of the community can foster an appreciation for the importance of the environment in general and the salmon specifically.”

-2023 Salmon Docent Trainees

### ISSUE

With approximately 250 miles of marine shoreline, over 10,000 acres of public lands managed by Kitsap County Parks, and hundreds of streams that feed into Puget Sound and Hood Canal, Kitsap County supports a wide array of diverse ecosystems. Kitsap County is one of the smallest counties in Washington State with about 395 square miles of land. Kitsap is also home to a steadily increasing population. As reported in 2022, Kitsap County's population density was the third highest density of any county in Washington State, estimated at 635 people per square mile. The land and water resources that make Kitsap such a beautiful place to live are threatened by this growth and urban development. The Puget Sound Institute estimates that 52,000 – 66,000 pounds of pollutants are released into the Puget Sound each day, and the cost of stormwater pollution is expected to exceed \$1 billion over the next ten years. Pollution and habitat loss threaten some the Pacific Northwest's most iconic species including the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and the Pacific salmon populations. The road to ecosystem recovery is long, making education and engagement critical for the recovery, protection, and preservation of our region for future generations.

### RESPONSE

The WSU Extension Water Stewardship Program provides Kitsap residents with educational training programs, volunteer opportunities, and educational events to help turn environmental knowledge into action. WSU Kitsap Extension employs a three-pronged approach to tackling water and natural resource issues:

1. We teach people to value and protect our natural resources through public events, and three in-depth training programs led by staff and local experts.
2. We train people to be volunteer educators, to share knowledge and inspire stewardship ethics in others.
3. Through partnerships with local agencies and governments, we connect people with local restoration, enhancement, and monitoring projects.



## BY THE NUMBERS

- Trained 102 new recruits across Kitsap, 66 volunteering their time.
  - ◇ 33 Beach Naturalists
  - ◇ 25 Stream Stewards
  - ◇ 24 Salmon Docents
  - ◇ 20 Olympic College Students
- Trained volunteers committed 5,041 hours to improving local ecosystems through education, stewardship, and community science.
  - ◇ 1,224 Beach Naturalist hours
  - ◇ 3,817 Stream Stewards / Salmon Docents hours
- Water Stewardship volunteers participated in 5 enrichment events totaling over 10 hours of continuing education.

## IMPACTS

- In 2023, the Water Stewardship Program trained 102 new recruits across the Stream Steward, Salmon Docent, and Beach Naturalist training programs. Collectively, trainees engaged in 63 hours of instruction.
- Program training and presentation topics varied based on training focus, and in 2023, examples of these included:
  - ◇ Stream Stewards – Low impact development, stream invertebrates, watershed geology and hydrology.
  - ◇ Salmon Docents – Salmon life cycle and physiology, interpretation, and habitat importance.
  - ◇ Beach Naturalist – Salish Sea oceanography, intertidal invertebrates, invasive green crab research, and community science.
- To ensure continued participation in Water Stewardship Programs, several continuing education and involvement opportunities were coordinated throughout the year. In 2023, 4 events were coordinated, totaling over 9 hours of continuing education.
- Below are a few examples of how volunteers made a difference in 2023:
  - ◇ Educated the public: shared salmon information with visitors at Kitsap Salmon Tours; worked with GPC to educate students in the Land Labs Programs; led beach explorations for the public; participated in Discovery Play days with KRL and CC Task Force
  - ◇ Stewardship: trail maintenance, tree plantings, invasive weed removal, and beach clean-ups
  - ◇ Community science: green crab monitoring, oyster sampling for water quality monitoring, amphibian monitoring and forest monitoring

## CITED RESOURCES:

- <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/kitsap> - by Jim Vleming, regional labor economist - updated May 2022
- <https://www.eopugetsound.org/articles/stormwater-facts>

